

the democratic surround

Multimedia & American
Liberalism from World War II
to the Psychedelic Sixties

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The Museum of Modern Art Makes the World a Family

In the early spring of 1955, more than a quarter of a million people streamed through the doors of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. They came to immerse themselves in *The Family of Man*. An exhibition of 503 photographs of men, women and children, made by 273 photographers from around the world and selected by photographer Edward Steichen and his assistant, Wayne Miller, *The Family of Man* filled the entire second floor of the museum. A series of temporary walls channeled visitors through the images, allowing them to move at their own pace, to pause where they liked, and to pool at pictures of particular interest. Visitors gazed at photographs of children dancing, families gathering, and men and women of myriad nations working, walking, marrying, fighting. Some pictures dangled from wires overhead, some hung from poles, and at least one faced downward from the ceiling. Some filled entire walls while others were as small as a handbill. Together, the installation and the images left viewers few places to turn in which they would not encounter a picture of another person doing something they were likely to recognize.

The Family of Man quickly became one of the most popular—and, ultimately, controversial—exhibitions in the museum's history. In the wake of its run at the Museum of Modern Art, five copies of the show traveled around the United States and, thanks to funding from the United States Information Agency, to thirty-seven foreign countries as well. The USIA estimates that more than 7.5 million visitors saw the exhibition abroad in the ten years after it opened in New York.¹ By 1978 the exhibition catalog

had sold more than five million copies, and it remains in print today. Yet *The Family of Man* also became a critical whipping boy. Particularly since the late 1960s, writers have attacked the show as a species of American mythology, an attempt to mask domestic and international problems of race and class, and even an act of aesthetic colonialism.² Many have implied that the exhibition resembled the postwar American family and postwar American culture, and that all three were systems of psychological and political containment.

Yet, if we return to World War II and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, we can see *The Family of Man* as part of a widespread effort to democratize American families and, through them, American society. By late 1943, the leaders of the museum and the intellectuals who surrounded them agreed: cultures and nations had personalities; those personalities depended on the psyches of individual citizens; and communication, whether through mass media or art or interpersonal interaction, could turn the minds of citizens in authoritarian or democratic directions. Museum officials no longer feared for American morale since it was increasingly likely that the Allies would eventually win the war. As they turned toward the postwar future, though, museum officials joined many analysts in fearing for the psychological health of two specific groups: children and returning veterans.³ If the individual personality reflected and shaped the personality of the nation, they agreed, then the future of America depended quite literally on the mindsets of its children. Likewise, if veterans who had been forced to sublimate their individuality and join the military mass were to refrain from bringing the authoritarianism of the battlefield home, they too would need to be transformed.

In both cases, the museum drew on Bauhaus pedagogy, and particularly on the work of László Moholy-Nagy, to build communicative environments in which these changes could take place. Since 1937 the museum had employed a former schoolteacher named Victor D'Amico to introduce New York children to the pleasures of modern art. During the war, D'Amico brought the Progressive learning philosophy of John Dewey and the training practices of the Bauhaus together—first to teach children the ways of democratic interaction, and later to rehabilitate combat veterans. In 1944, D'Amico drew on a set of therapeutic and instructional

practices outlined by Moholy-Nagy and transformed his classes into a national model for using art to resocialize veterans at the Museum of Modern Art's new War Veterans' Art Center. In 1948, as veteran demand eased, the museum turned the Veterans' Center into a public resource, the People's Art Center. By the early 1950s, with a national baby boom well under way, D'Amico's Bauhaus-infused teaching environments had become places where parents and children created art together, in self-consciously democratic harmony.

In the wake of the McCarthy hearings and the Korean War, these environments and the idea of the family itself took on a deeply political valence. In *The Family of Man*, Steichen brought together the antiauthoritarian, family-centered teaching mission of the People's Art Center and the surround aesthetics of Herbert Bayer that he had first deployed in the *Road to Victory* exhibition. Steichen and his designers presented viewers with an array of images displayed in varied sizes, at different heights, and at all angles. The installation asked viewers to follow their own course among the images, to focus on the pictures that were most meaningful to them, and to knit their subjects into the fabric of their own personalities. *The Family of Man* thus became a three-dimensional arena in which visitors were asked to practice psychological individuation in a social context. They could also engage in acts of mutual recognition, choice and empathy. These were the core perceptual and affective skills on which efforts to boost American morale and democratize children and veterans had depended during and just after the war. Now, as Americans began to divide the world into two psychological and political camps, they became the basis of a Cold War vision of national unity as well.

In that sense, the exhibition also became a fulcrum moment in the development of an increasingly ubiquitous mode of media power. Even as he gave Americans what he and they saw as a democratic degree of freedom in relation to imagery and so to one another, Steichen asked them to pursue their individual experiences within collective terms set by his own aesthetic expertise. Though they moved at their own pace through the galleries, though they could enjoy an enormous variety of visual opportunities for pleasure and engagement with others both like and unlike themselves, visitors also made their choices in terms that had been set for them long

before they entered the room. In other words, even as it freed Americans from the massifying effects of totalitarianism and its media, *The Family of Man* invited them to adjust themselves to a softer but equally pervasive system of management—a system pioneered, in part, in Victor D’Amico’s classrooms.

DEMOCRATIZING CHILDREN AND VETERANS

Though we may think of the Museum of Modern Art today primarily as a place for exhibiting art, its founders saw it as an educational institution.⁴ In the 1930s, this meant teaching Americans to appreciate modern art by exhibiting it but also by teaching children how to make it. Beginning in 1937, Victor D’Amico began teaching children’s classes in the fine arts at the museum in the evenings and on weekends; by 1941 he had become a full-time member of the museum’s staff and created teaching programs linked to twenty-five New York City high schools. He had also developed a Young People’s Gallery which doubled as a studio in which students curated exhibitions of modern art and made objects of their own.⁵ D’Amico taught in accord with the ideals of John Dewey: he wanted art to be not just a set of skills, but an experience that might awaken the creativity and individuality of his pupils. To that end, he eschewed such then-common teaching methods as asking groups of students to copy models or draw identical subjects. “Indoctrinary teaching stifles creativeness,” he later wrote, and because it did, D’Amico encouraged children to work toward individual expression, collaboratively when it suited them, alone when it didn’t.⁶ He supplied the materials they worked with, but their artistic directions were their own.

In the years before the war, D’Amico and other Progressive educators saw art as a means of individual psychological growth.⁷ With the arrival of World War II, they and art instructors across the country linked their teaching and the psychological growth it promoted to the war effort.⁸ In January 1941, President Roosevelt had identified “freedom of speech and expression” as the first of the Four Freedoms for which America would soon have to fight. Museum officials and art teachers nationwide quickly framed their work in his terms. By January 1943, the Museum of Modern Art had mounted an entire exhibition on the theme, called *Art Education*

in Wartime. In a draft press release, museum officials argued that art educators were helping to win the war from kindergarten through college by helping children avoid becoming authoritarians. Rigidity, obedience, uniformity — these were the psychological characteristics of fascists, the pamphlet suggested. Art classes encouraged flexibility, creativity, and individuality, the psychological characteristics on which democracy depended.

During the war, Victor D'Amico's educational philosophy achieved its most concise and widely seen form in an annual winter fair ultimately known as the Children's Art Carnival. Started in 1942 and recreated regularly over the next twenty years, the carnival showcased the individual creativity of its visitors. In the winters of 1945 and 1946, for instance, children sat surrounded by stained glass windows created by artists such as Marc Chagall and Alexander Calder. The students made their own windows by pasting cellophane between pieces of black paper. They were not to copy Chagall and Calder, but to see them as inspirations. The environment of the Carnival was to draw out the individuality of each student, while the particular project of the window was to give it a collective form. In this way, the Carnival encouraged the sort of unity-in-diversity then much celebrated as the basis of national morale. Moreover, D'Amico asked the children to create under the most egalitarian conditions. In 1947, a writer for *House and Garden* magazine put it this way: "Parents are not invited to this party; they may only peep at their young after they have pushed through a bright red turnstile. The room itself is carnival-gay and equipped with everything an artist needs. There are no instructors. Mr. D'Amico has learned that you do not *teach* children art [*italics original*]. You give them the tools, stand by in case of storms, and let them work their own way."⁹

In 1944, D'Amico brought the techniques he used to teach children into a new venture designed to aid combat veterans: the War Veterans' Art Center. In teaching children, D'Amico had introduced comparatively new-formed psyches to the pleasures of individual expression and egalitarian collaboration. With veterans, he confronted individuals who had experienced a totalitarian military environment. In a 1943 article in the museum's *Bulletin*, D'Amico explained how the sort of freedom he promoted in his children's classes might enable veterans to adjust to civilian life. "It has been found that free expressions in art become a mirror of the

individual's inner life and personality to the trained eye," he wrote. Works of art, he suggested, mediated between their individual creators and the world of experts who sought to help individuals reenter the social world. The artist needed to be "free" as he or she worked, in part so as to experience a democratic form of independence, and in part so as to render his or her interior life available to expert guidance. Much like the children at the Children's Art Carnival, veterans at the center had to be themselves, but under the watchful eye of more mature guides. As D'Amico put it, "Dictated or academic methods are totally unreliable, for they reveal nothing of the inner life and may aggravate mal-adjustment by increasing frustration and tension."¹⁰

EACH VETERAN IS DIFFERENT



INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION

FIGURE 6.1.

A poster for the War Veterans' Art Center at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. At the end of World War II, many saw art as a way to reindividuate men who had experienced deindividuation in the military. From Victor D'Amico, "Art for War Veterans," 4. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York.

For D'Amico and the leaders of the Museum of Modern Art, the art classroom modeled a larger political world. Both the individual mind of the student and the social relations of the classroom suffered from tensions—intrapsychic in the first case and interpersonal in the second. Veterans lived with memories of the obedience required of men who had become accustomed to uniforms and orders and, at the same time, memories of how their acceptance of the military's total authority had led many to experience the madness of combat. Authoritarian teaching threatened to amplify their suffering and release it into the larger American body politic. By contrast, egalitarian methods might prevent such infection. "The war has created new and greater tensions which will cause their share of mental and emotional maladjustments," wrote D'Amico in 1943. "If the therapeutic value of art is employed in a plan for re-education [of veterans], America may be spared a phenomenal rise in mental illness and emotional disturbance."¹¹

By 1943 the Museum of Modern Art had in fact become a national center for rethinking the use of art in the healing of wounded and traumatized soldiers. In late 1942, James Thrall Soby, the director of the museum's Armed Forces Program, began reaching out to psychiatrists, psychologists, and rehabilitation specialists to see how the arts were being used in hospitals. At this time, art therapy did not exist as the discipline it is today. Rather, the arts were used largely by occupational therapists to aid the injured in passing the time and recovering lost motor skills. Therapists encouraged soldiers to work with craft kits and to copy established models when they painted or sculpted. Free expression played little role in this work. In the wake of the Freudian revolution of the 1920s and 1930s, however, psychiatrists had turned their patients toward the arts and particularly toward painting and drawing. These doctors believed that when done with the proper degree of independence, such work revealed the inner state of its maker and so could aid in diagnosis. At the same time, they thought it could speed the amateur artist on the way to health by releasing the internal psychological pressure of traumatic memories and so reducing the intrapsychic tensions they caused.

In 1943, Soby organized an exhibition in which the views of the psychiatrists and the occupational therapists collided. Entitled *The Arts in*

Therapy and designed by Herbert Bayer, the exhibition featured two distinct areas. In the first, the museum displayed the work of the winners of a nationwide competition to develop projects designed to provide new and more creative modes of occupational therapy. These projects ranged from the painting of ceramics to the making of paper sculptures, and included, among other things, a series of exercises developed by László Moholy-Nagy and his colleagues at the School of Design in Chicago. In the second area, the exhibition featured paintings and drawings by patients in psychiatric hospitals and by members of the armed forces, some still on active duty. In an essay for the museum's *Bulletin*, Dr. Edward Liss, a practicing psychiatrist and one of James Soby's primary consultants, argued that psychologically therapeutic art did more than simply restore skills for living. It made the personality whole again by fusing "thought and action" in a single "psychosomatic unit." The arts and the sciences, he wrote, worked together, on the shared principle of "creativity," to reunify the fractured psyche.¹²

Such views paralleled those of social scientists concerned with the nature of democratic morale. But they also echoed the teachings of the Bauhaus, and particularly of László Moholy-Nagy. By the middle of World War II, Moholy's School of Design had also turned toward the rehabilitation of veterans and had begun offering courses to train art therapists. In a 1943 article, Moholy argued that the multimodal methods for training artists that he and others had developed at the Bauhaus should now become techniques for restoring veterans to psychological health. According to him, nineteenth-century industry tended to obliterate the individuality of workers. It neglected "the biological, physiological, and psychological requirements of the individual, his need for a balanced program of work, recreation, and leisure." As a result, "the mental health of the people deteriorated."¹³ Now, he suggested, military experience had done the same thing to soldiers. To make the injured veteran whole, Moholy recommended the same multisensory training the Bauhaus had developed to build up a new kind of artist. The handicapped veteran "must be trained in the use of all his faculties. In order for his buried energies to be released for contemporary orientation, he has to overcome his old habits, ideas, and judgments not any longer applicable to our age. Creative work and con-

scious personality development can overcome maladjustment or feelings of inferiority . . . and may open the way for free, efficient, and satisfactory activities.”¹⁴

Moholy went on to propose the development of “a laboratory school and research department for programs of rehabilitation” designed along the lines of the original Bauhaus.¹⁵ Such a school was beyond the means of his own struggling School of Design, but not beyond those of the Museum of Modern Art. In 1944, at the urging of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, the museum established the War Veterans’ Art Center in its own facility at 681 Fifth Avenue, and appointed Victor D’Amico to head it.

The program of the Veterans’ Art Center resembled that of the first-year curriculum at the Bauhaus—quite probably because of the museum’s many ties to former Bauhaus faculty, including Soby and D’Amico’s familiarity with Moholy’s recent therapeutic efforts. Between 1944 and 1948, the center taught courses in ten areas ranging from drawing, painting, and typography to woodworking, sculpture, and the principles of design. To incoming students it offered an orientation course: like the first-year program at the Bauhaus, this class introduced students to each of the media on offer and to the ways in which each stimulated the artist’s senses. Students then pursued advanced work in the areas to which they were best suited. And much as courses at the Bauhaus sought to produce psychological integration and professional self-sufficiency, so too did the offerings at the center. In his 1948 director’s report, Victor D’Amico recalled that “the object was to help veterans find themselves through creative art.”¹⁶

To do so, however, veterans needed to take up art in a way that echoed both Bauhaus ideals of self-formation and the therapeutic agenda of the psychiatrists with whom James Soby had been working. Teachers at the center encouraged students to integrate “form and content” in their work, and to bring together multiple media where appropriate, much as Bauhaus instructors had in years past. And as it had at the Bauhaus, success at the center “had to be both visual and emotional.”¹⁷ To make coherent art and to integrate the personality of the artist were one and the same project. As formerly Bauhaus craftsmen had rebelled against the strictures of modern industry, so now veterans cut themselves free from the restraints of military life. The socialist impulse behind the original Bauhaus now became a

democratic American impulse. Freedom of individual expression, egalitarian collaboration, creativity itself—in the late 1940s, all remained essential elements of the democratic personality and democratic society. Art too changed: at the War Veterans' Art Center, it was not simply the product and emblem of the artist's own integration. Rather, in keeping with the ideals of men like Edward Liss, it became a mirror of the inner life of the veteran and a window through which he could see and express himself. Bernard Pfriem, who taught advanced drawing and painting at the center, recalled that his own class began "largely as therapy, offering relaxing recreational outlets to men tensed by military experiences." As the class went on, however, it became "mainly . . . an opportunity [for the veteran] to be an integrated individual, to reflect an indigenous personality, to voice graphically an identity and independence which had been lost, shattered or smothered by regimentation."¹⁸

THROUGH THE ENCHANTED GATE

In the four years of its existence, the center treated nearly 1,500 veterans, most of whom were suffering from psychological distress. Like virtually all of the Museum of Modern Art's educational programs in the 1940s, it received national coverage in the press and one of its classes was featured on the newsreel *The March of Time*.¹⁹ When in 1948 the museum decided to transform the War Veterans' Art Center into a wholly civilian enterprise, the People's Art Center, it repurposed the highly individual, collaborative, and multisensory teaching tactics of the Veterans' Center,—this time, to help democratize the American family.

By the late 1940s, the global *political* utopianism of the immediate post-war period had begun to fade, but its psychological analog—the hope for a tolerant, egalitarian, and cosmopolitan American who could also be a world citizen—had not. On the contrary, the sort of open, democratic self described by writers like Charles Morris and Harold Lasswell was, if anything, in more demand. If the democratic personality had been the basis of national morale in the early 1940s, it was now becoming the basis of a liberal self and of a liberal Western polity that could withstand a confrontation with international communism. In this context, the family became a

symbolic redoubt for American democracy.²⁰ As the editors of the magazine *American Home* put it in their November 1946 issue, “parents” were to be “architects of peace.” This task sometimes meant turning the home into a fortress against a threatening world, complete with a well-stocked bomb shelter in the backyard. But for many in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it also meant working to raise the sort of open-minded, empathetic, emotionally flexible children who would not start the kinds of wars they themselves had just survived.

In a preface to the 1959 reissue of a widely read 1949 collection of essays entitled *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, for instance, popular journalist and editor Ruth Nanda Anshen made this point explicitly. The family must be a bulwark against the threat of nuclear war, she argued. But the source of its power would have to be “creative work, nourished by the nexus between parents and children.”²¹ Creativity could bring about a new sense of global responsibility in child and parent alike. At the same time, it could help create a simultaneously more diverse and more unified America. “Even as the cell is the unit of the organic body, so the family is the unit of society,” wrote Anshen in her essay for the original volume. “The ultimate harmony is the harmony of enduring individualities joined in the unity of a common frame of reference.”²² The alternative to such a highly American vision was the mechanical unity of fascism. In his essay for the volume, Max Horkheimer described how the authoritarian family could breed future Nazis. “Subjects who may be regarded as highly susceptible to fascist propaganda profess an ideology calling for rigid, uncritical identification with the family and reveal their absolute submission to familial authority in early infancy,” he explained. “Fascist-minded subjects show, on a deeper level, no genuine attachments to the parents, whom they accept in a fairly conventionalized and externalized way. It is this configuration of submissiveness and coldness which more than anything else defines the potential fascist of our time.”²³

In the view of Anshen and her collaborators, the American family that could confront the authoritarian regimes of the early 1950s needed to be anything but rigid and conformist. It needed to be an intimate, playful, egalitarian group devoted to the sharing of creativity. Toy makers agreed.²⁴ As the birth rate exploded in the decade after World War II, toy makers

sought to supply the new generation with devices designed to help them become more creative. For instance, the company Creative Playthings, founded in 1947, supplied jungle gyms and wooden swings to schools, building playgrounds that would encourage individualized yet collaborative exploration. A firm called Playskool likewise sold its ubiquitous Tinkertoys, sets of rods and wheels that let children build in whatever way they saw fit. As a 1956 ad for Playskool in *Playthings* magazine made clear, the emphasis on childhood creativity in this period was ubiquitous: “When a toy is designed to make the most of a child’s natural creativeness,” explained its copywriters, “you gain an unlimited selling market.”²⁵

In 1948, when the Museum of Modern Art opened its People’s Art Center, the national push for creative play was just getting under way. D’Amico and his staff at the center met it with a political and aesthetic sensibility formed by the museum’s earlier push against fascism. When D’Amico and his colleagues looked out onto the landscape of American art teaching, they saw “a proliferation of school contests and competitions, paint-by-numbers kits” and the like, all of which taught “art through copying.”²⁶ As D’Amico put it, “these devices . . . are all based on a method of imitation that is slavish and dictatorial. They deny the right of individual choice and freedom and sow the seed for a dictator type of society. They threaten the creative life of our country because they strike at the heart of creative education. How can anyone who believes himself to be creative, whether he be artist or amateur, or anyone who respects individuality, endure these methods or fail to see the inherent menace?”²⁷

To counter this protofascist sort of instruction and to bolster the creativity of the American family, D’Amico developed the Parent-Child Class at the People’s Art Center. Begun in 1950, the Parent-Child Class extended the circle of egalitarian play formerly drawn by the walls of the Children’s Art Carnival to include parents themselves. Parents were to be not instructors, but collaborators for their children. In the classroom, parents and children found themselves surrounded by identical materials and worked on them independently or together as they saw fit, each at his own skill level and each toward his own end. Parents became childlike once again, while their children enjoyed managing themselves within an environment established for the purpose. In short, the class-

room became a world without a dictator, unified in its pursuit of individual diversity.

Like workshops of the War Veterans' Art Center, or of the Bauhaus long before that, the Parent-Child Class focused on introducing individuals to an array of materials, allowing them to select those that mattered most to them, and urging them to integrate their engagement with these materials into a new sense of themselves as creative individuals—and of the family as a center for the development of creative and therefore nonauthoritarian citizens. Yet the Parent-Child Class also modeled a new way to structure political authority in a democracy. Even as it leveled the playing field between parent and child in the classroom, the Parent-Child Class shifted the locus of control over children themselves. Within its confines, power now resided in two places: first, in the hands of those who built the room in which the class took place and selected the materials with which the children would work, and second, within the children themselves. In this setting children needed to learn not only how to make art, but how to manage themselves in terms set by largely invisible others. Their parents had been demoted from instructors and role models to artistic equals.

To the extent that social analysts and even the general public recognized art teaching and the family in this period as key settings for personality formation, the Parent-Child Class also became a prototype of an emerging political ideal. Moreover, it did so well beyond the confines of the Museum of Modern Art, through the new medium of television. In 1952, Victor D'Amico and his staff worked with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to produce a new program, *Through the Enchanted Gate*, for television station WNBT in New York, as well as an accompanying guide for parents.²⁸ Together these materials modeled a world of empathetic, racially and sexually diverse individuals, each pursuing their own individuality in the company of others.

The first year's thirteen half-hour episodes borrowed the structure of the Children's Carnival. The show opened with a shot of the wire gate—just big enough to admit a child of twelve or so—that had served to keep parents out of the workspace of the Carnival. "This is an enchanted gate and it's like no other gate you've seen," intoned an invisible narrator. It admitted only children ages three to ten, he explained. Adults could come



FIGURE 6.2.

A father and daughter make hats in the Parent-Child Class at the Museum of Modern Art on the television program *Through the Enchanted Gate*.

in only “if you still believe in fantasy, if you can see with your fingers . . . ”²⁹ Once inside, the eight children in each episode found themselves surrounded by art materials and accompanied by a teacher as they pursued a particular theme. Victor D’Amico served as an on-camera host, visiting the classroom now and again and summarizing its achievements at the end of the show.

Within the classroom, children made art, but they also made a particular kind of community. In an episode devoted to exploring texture and vision, for example, four boys and four girls closed their eyes and whacked a beach ball. “What did you miss?” their teacher, Maureen Maser, asked. “You need both your fingers to tell you . . . and your eyes to tell you it has stripes.”³⁰ At one level, viewers at home could see a lesson in aesthetic perception. At another, however, they could see a lesson in social collaboration. Of the eight students, six were white, one was Asian American, and one African American. Today we might call such a distribution tokenism; but in 1952, to display a social group in which a quarter of the participants were both people of color and completely equal participants in all activities was, to say the least, unusual. Moreover, these sorts of racial distribu-

tions obtained across the show's two seasons. On the show's soundstage, children of many races pursued their own creative expressions, and out of that process, social unity emerged. Such authorities as revealed themselves on screen—Mauren Maser, Victor D'Amico—were hardly authoritarian. Rather, they deployed their expertise in order to promote the psychological, social, and aesthetic growth of their charges.

That growth took place by means of a guided encounter with the senses. In an episode devoted to making "space designs," for instance, children brought objects from home with which to work, such as straws, sticks, and a pinwheel. Their teacher then showed them a potted plant and explained that it, too, possessed elements of design. "Nature has a lot to teach us about space designs!" she exclaimed. Happily inspired, her charges plunged off to assemble a cornucopia of different materials into their own abstract constructions. As they worked, they exercised their senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell. They interacted with each other and with their teacher. And at the end of their time together, they emerged with objects that served as mirrors of their moods and windows into their minds. "They're all so different!" said Victor D'Amico as he entered the on-air classroom. "Yes, it's always such fun to see what they've done because each child has his own way of doing things," replied the teacher, Miss Wilson.³¹

In the second season, parents accompanied their children through the enchanted gate and onto the screen. "Here are the families!" announced the narrator as they walked hand-in-hand through the gate, the grown-ups ducking. "They're people who live together and play together and work together."³² Once again, the classroom became a model of an idealized postwar America. An episode focused on helping families express their feelings about cities, for example, featured a Japanese-American family, the Kawachis, whose father spoke limited English. Only a decade after American officials had forced thousands of Japanese-Americans into internment camps, and only eight years after American bombers had leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Kawachi family worked side-by-side with two American families of European descent, the Zankers and the Halls. Children and parents massaged balls of clay, built windowed towers from sticks, and piled blocks up on a table. Together they built new cities, almost literally out of the ruins of World War II. "I guess in art you can be

pretty free,” said Mrs. Kawachi. “Yes,” replied Victor D’Amico, “that’s what art’s for.”³³

At the end of each episode, Victor D’Amico asked children at home to send in their own artwork and offered their parents his printed guide to family art making. He also held up pictures and sculptures he had received the week before, and discussed their merits. For D’Amico, the television soundstage was meant to launch the building of similar classrooms—and similarly creative, egalitarian families—in homes everywhere. In 1954, D’Amico published a slim volume entitled *Art for the Family* in which he codified his ambitions. Drawing many of his examples from episodes of *Through the Enchanted Gate*, he encouraged parents to step down from their authoritarian perches in the family and collaborate with their children. He especially recommended the development of “a family art gallery” in every house, where each member of the family could choose examples of his or her own creations to hang. In the family gallery, children would learn from parents and parents from children. No one would copy each other or anyone or anything else. “The camera can do that better,”



FIGURE 6.3.

A family working in its playroom. Victor D’Amico recommended that every family establish a gallery in their home to display artworks made by parents and children. At the height of the Cold War, D’Amico hoped such galleries would foster a culture of egalitarian, even democratic creativity. Photograph by Arthur Rothstein. Courtesy of Dr. Annie Segan.

wrote D'Amico. "The camera cannot think or feel or select or imagine. That is what you can do."³⁴

As D'Amico's critique of the camera suggests, art was to help produce an organic and thus democratic solidarity among family members, and not the mechanistic unity of fascism. The basis of that solidarity was psychological. D'Amico urged family members to regularly examine their art for signs of aesthetic and psychological development. "Some signs of growth will show in your work," he explained, "but the most important ones happen inside of you and show in the way you see and feel and work."³⁵ By 1954, D'Amico's ideal family had become a link in a chain of environments devoted to the reformation of the self through art. The Children's Art Carnival, the War Veterans' Art Center, the People's Art Center, *Through the Enchanted Gate*—each provided an arena in which individuals could practice the perceptual skills that helped develop democratic inclinations. At the same time, these environments modeled a world managed from without by benevolent experts. Even as they pursued what all described as their own unique psychological and artistic development, the students in these environments did so in terms and with materials set for them by others. To put it another way, even as they pursued the freedom of expression associated with art, they practiced precisely the kind of social adjustment called for by contemporary psychiatrists.

FROM THE FAMILY ART GALLERY TO *THE FAMILY OF MAN*

In 1955, the politically prototypical families, immersive artistic environments, and psychotherapeutic understanding of the artwork that animated Victor D'Amico's education projects became central elements in *The Family of Man*. To understand how, though, we need to scrape away several decades of critical disdain. Since the 1970s, critics have based their assaults on two kinds of claims. First, even the most sympathetic analysts of recent years have argued that the show was essentially a *Life* magazine photo essay writ large. In this view, Steichen and his colleagues arrayed their images like words in a sentence so as to deliver a particular message to a relatively passive audience. Second, critics have suggested that the images chosen for the exhibition, coupled with their arrangement at the Mu-

seum of Modern Art and elsewhere, sought to contain problems of sexual and racial difference within the symbolic confines of the nuclear family.

These views have been compounded by the museum's promotion of Edward Steichen as a creative genius and by Steichen's own egotism. As told by Steichen and the many journalists and historians who have followed his lead, *The Family of Man* emerged primarily out of Steichen's own heroic impulses. One of the most well known American photographers of the early twentieth century, a chronicler of America's artistic and corporate elites, and from 1947 to 1962 the director of the Museum of Modern Art's photography department, Steichen was in his mid-seventies when he started working on *The Family of Man*. He came to do the show, he later claimed, because of the failure of earlier exhibitions he had organized to spark antiwar activism. During World War II, Steichen served as the head of a Navy photographic team and also staged two large and popular photography exhibitions designed to boost American morale: *Road to Victory* in 1942 and *Power in the Pacific* in 1945, both at the Museum of Modern Art. In February 1951 he mounted a third exhibition at the museum focused on combat, *Korea: The Impact of War in Photographs*. He hoped these shows would help viewers come to hate warfare, but they didn't: "Although I had presented war in all its grimness in three exhibitions, I had failed to accomplish my mission. I had not incited people into taking open and united action against war itself. . . . What was wrong? I came to the conclusion that I had been working from a negative approach, that what was needed was a positive statement on what a wonderful thing life was, how marvelous people were, and, above all, how alike people were in all parts of the world."³⁶

According to the now-canonical history of the show, this inspiration led Steichen to begin scouting for images to include in such a project. He and his assistant Wayne Miller scoured the files of the Farm Security Administration (FSA); the National Archives; the Library of Congress; photo agencies such as Black Star, Magnum, and the Soviet Union's SovFoto; and magazines including *Life* and *Seventeen*.³⁷ Steichen also traveled to Europe seeking images. He reached out to friends such as Dorothea Lange, one of the foremost FSA photographers, who in turn promoted the project among their colleagues. In a 1953 recruiting letter headlined "A Summons

to Photographers All Over the World,” for instance, Lange told her peers that the exhibition would “show Man to Man across the world. Here we hope to reveal by visual images Man’s dreams and aspirations, his strength, his despair under evil. If photography can bring these things to life, this exhibition will be created in a spirit of passionate and devoted faith in Man. Nothing short of that will do.”

In one draft of this letter, Lange listed thirty-three terms that she thought might inspire her colleagues. They still serve as a convenient map of the conceptual field within which she and Steichen were working:

Man	Friends	Government
Universal	Work	Competition
Timeless	Home	Invention
Love	Worship	Beauty
Create	Peace	Migration
Birth	Conflict	Fear
Death	Abode	Hope
Family	Hunger	Cooperation
Word	Pestilence	Dream
Father	Communication	Woman
Mother	Ancesters [sic]	Descendents [sic] ³⁸

With the assistance of Lange and many others, Steichen and Miller ultimately reviewed two million images. They winnowed these down to ten thousand, and then, working in a small loft on 52nd Street, to the 503 photographs that ultimately hung in the museum. Steichen all but prohibited abstract images from the exhibition. Instead, he drew primarily on the realistic snapshot aesthetics of contemporary photojournalism. Steichen and Miller’s final selection included images by Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Robert Capa, and Dorothea Lange. It also featured images by photographers who were soon to make names for less mainstream work, such as Robert Frank, Diane Arbus, and Bill Brandt. Steichen also thumbed through literature and journalism, seeking quotations to accompany the images on the museum’s walls. He turned to his brother-in-law, poet Carl Sandburg, for help. Sandburg wrote a prologue for the exhibition; its walls

ultimately also featured passages from the Bible, Navajo Indian lore, and even the writings of acerbic philosopher Bertrand Russell.

When the exhibition finally opened in 1955, the museum and the press made a great deal of Steichen and Miller's editorial efforts. Most reviewers loved the show. Many lauded Steichen as a sort of author—speaking in what he and reviewers alike called the “universal language” of photography—and the exhibition as a text, an essay even.³⁹ Over the years, however, critics have come to decry what they saw as Steichen's transposition of the photo essay from magazine page to museum wall. For the last forty years at least, most have agreed with journalist Russell Lynes's 1973 account, in which he wrote that *The Family of Man* “was a vast photo essay, a literary formula basically, with much of the emotional and visual quality provided by sheer bigness of the blow-ups and its rather sententious message sharpened by juxtaposition of opposites—wheat fields and landscapes of boulders, peasants and patricians, a sort of ‘look at all these nice folks in all these strange places who belong to this family.’”⁴⁰

In the post-1960s writings of Lynes and others, the notion that the exhibition was an essay and the implication that Steichen was its “author” has worked to support the notion that the exhibition modeled the conformity of 1950s American culture. In these accounts Steichen has become a patriarch, the curatorial equivalent of a Cold War politician, manipulating his audience with bombast. His power resides principally in the images he has selected. The manner of their installation at the Museum of Modern Art goes largely unanalyzed. Their audience, largely absent, can present no explanation for the show's unceasing appeal. Melted down into the anonymity of attendance figures, those who visited the exhibition and bought the book become dupes: unlike the citizens of parti-colored post-countercultural 1973, the museum visitors of 1955 remain trapped in a black-and-white episode of *Leave It to Beaver*. “Look at all these nice folks . . . who belong to this family” indeed.

A NEW GENEALOGY

Yet *The Family of Man* did not emerge solely in response to the cultural politics of the 1950s—nor, for that matter, wholly out of the genius of Ed-

ward Steichen. Rather, it grew as much if not more from the promotion of diversity as the basis of national unity in the early 1940s and from the museum's wartime efforts to train its visitors in the ways of the democratic personality.

In November of 1950, as Steichen was still gathering his materials for his Korean War exhibition, the museum's director, René d'Harnoncourt, wrote a letter to Henry Ford II, chairman of the board of trustees of the Ford Foundation. In 1948 the trustees had convened a committee to outline a new funding agenda for the organization; in September 1950 they published its conclusions. D'Harnoncourt set Steichen's new project within a framework outlined in the Ford Foundation's annual report of 1950. Writing in the dominant idiom of the day, the foundation trustees argued that all of humanity faced a choice between two modes of living. "One is democratic, dedicated to the freedom and dignity of the individual," they wrote. "The other is authoritarian, where freedom and justice do not exist, and human rights and truth are subordinated wholly to the state."⁴¹ From a distance of sixty years, it is easy to layer these words onto the global map of the Cold War and so to see them as promoting a new American hegemony. But it is harder to recognize that within that work, there was another, antistatist impulse. The trustees of the Ford Foundation articulated this impulse with characteristic white-collar restraint: "Human welfare requires tolerance and respect for individual social, religious, and cultural differences. . . . Within wide limits, every person has a right to go his own way and to be free from interference or harassment because of nonconformity."⁴²

To make such individual freedom a reality, the trustees advocated not hierarchical control, but governmentality. Democracy was not simply a design for state government, they explained. "It is a way of total living, and to choose it means to choose it again and again, today and tomorrow, and continuously to reaffirm it in every act of life."⁴³ The job of government was not to control the choices of citizens, but rather to set a principled framework within which they might make their own choices. For the trustees, such a system was the opposite of hierarchies of fascism and communism, in which men were slaves or masters. In the more egalitarian democratic system, they wrote, "principles become actions."⁴⁴ The job of

the Ford Foundation in the coming years would be to promote such principles—and by implication, such a mode of control—worldwide.

In his letter to Henry Ford, d'Harnoncourt noted that the museum's director of photography, Edward Steichen, had been at work for more than a year on an exhibition tentatively called "'the family of man'" that might become a "demonstration of this basic concept of a free society." The word "demonstration" is important here. The exhibition was "not to be a propaganda show," wrote d'Harnoncourt. It would not bend the truth, nor would it try to deliver a message a single, identical message into every viewer's mind. On the contrary, by gathering multiple images the exhibition would avoid replicating the one-to-many, top-down messaging patterns of fascist propaganda. As d'Harnoncourt put it, "Our beliefs will be told by means of the faces, actions and achievements of free people from all over the world."⁴⁵

In other words, while Steichen's show would have a message in the general sense, it would not seek to *impose* its views upon the audience. Rather, it would attempt to build a framework of principles, draw visitors into that framework, and there allow them to see themselves as free individuals among a world of others. The exhibition would employ not the narrative mode traditionally associated with propaganda, but a more psychologically driven visual idiom. In their report, the trustees of the Ford Foundation had stressed that the most important problems facing humanity stemmed from interpersonal and international conflict, and that such problems could only be solved by "whole persons" who could "work together in confidence and mutual respect."⁴⁶ René d'Harnoncourt pointed out that the Museum of Modern Art had long been concerned with creating just those psychological and social conditions. The museum's education department, for instance, had developed a series of techniques that had proven especially effective at promoting the "basic democratic objective, the full development and use by each person of his inherent potentialities." During the war years, these techniques had healed returning veterans. Now, he wrote, they had "been incorporated into our general program and are bringing excellent results."⁴⁷

When visitors arrived at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, they encountered an exhibition that drew extensively on those techniques as well

as on the extended field of vision aesthetic and the prodemocratic, Gestaltist psychology of viewing that had characterized Steichen's earlier *Road to Victory*. As they moved toward the stairs that would take them to the second-floor viewing galleries, visitors received a pamphlet with a prologue by Carl Sandburg that set the interpretive stage: "The first cry of a newborn baby in Chicago or Zamboango, in Amsterdam or Rangoon, has the same pitch and key, each saying, 'I am! I have come through! I belong! I am a member of the Family.'" Lest his audience miss the point, Sandburg explained that in the exhibition, "you travel and see what the camera saw. . . . You might catch yourself saying, 'I'm not a stranger here.'"⁴⁸

Pamphlets in their hands, viewers then passed into an entryway and under an arch covered with images of a huge crowd seen from the air. Directly in front of them, they saw a river. To walk under the arch and into the exhibition space was to step into the river of humanity, flowing through time. But it was very definitely *not* to become part of an anonymous mass. On the contrary, when they left the foyer, visitors largely left images of crowds behind. As they entered the exhibition proper, visitors faced a Lucite wall hung with images of individuals and couples—sitting under a tree, chatting on a street corner, kissing, working—as well as a wedding procession. By implication, the entryway reminded visitors that much as America had defeated the fascists of World War II, the Americans of 1955 could defeat the new authoritarian forces of massification at home and abroad, and enter a peaceful, global society of individuals. Moreover, as Sandburg had told them, they would not be strangers; on the contrary, in all of the racial and cultural differences they would see, they would recognize themselves.

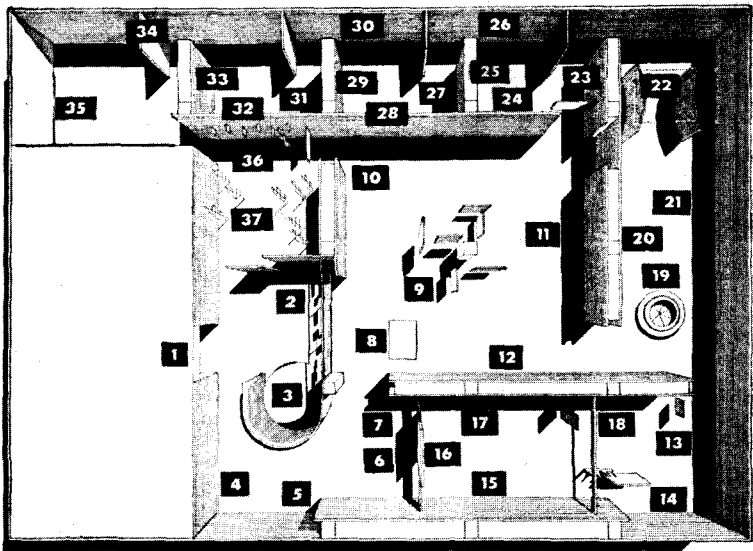
That recognition would depend on two aesthetic elements: the welding of the Bauhaus surround to the pattern of the individual life course, and the use of individual images as mirrors and windows into the psyches of visitors. Consider the layout of the exhibition. Its architect, Paul Rudolph, who was trained at Harvard by Walter Gropius, described his design as "telling a story."⁴⁹ Over the years, critics have agreed: many have characterized the show as drawing viewers down a thematic tunnel. At the entrance to the exhibition, they note, Steichen placed images of love and marriage; in its central hall, pictures of large, established families; and in

its final, narrow passages, images of old age, death, and at the very end, childhood once again. To walk through the exhibition was in some sense to walk through Steichen's vision of the life course—a vision that critics have castigated for its patriarchal, heterosexual conventionality.

At the broadest level, such readings make sense. Steichen did indeed structure the show to take visitors from birth to death and even to rebirth at the end. Yet critics writing in this vein have dramatically underplayed both the flexibility of Rudolph's installation and the range of social, racial and national possibilities represented in the pictures on the walls. Seen from overhead, Rudolph's plan for the exhibition reveals that it did not in fact require visitors to take each life stage in sequence. Nor did it demand they move through the exhibition together in a herd. After entering the museum's second-floor galleries, visitors turned right, into a small circular area which Rudolph had lit with fluorescent lights and hung with thin curtains to suggest hospital wards. On the walls, viewers saw pictures of women in labor, a child being born, mothers nursing. After that, however, visitors were on their own.

As viewers left the birth pavilion, the exhibition space opened out and presented them with an array of choices. To their right, they faced a display of images of children and, visible beyond it, a walkway with images of families playing and celebrating together. If they walked straight ahead or turned left, they found themselves in the open center of the exhibition. There they encountered enormous, wall-sized images of family groups hung from the ceiling at different heights and facing different directions. In a single glance, viewers could take in a Japanese farm family in traditional dress, a polygamous African family outside of their hut, two images of rural Italian farm families, and a multigenerational white American family posed around a wood stove, with portraits of nineteenth-century ancestors on the wall behind. Seen individually, these images could be read as stereotypical depictions of "primitive" Africans, "tradition-bound" Japanese and Italians, and "hillbilly" Americans. But seen together, as they were meant to be, the images *challenged* stereotypes. Far from privileging either whites or Americans, the photographs in fact equate them with two groups suffering extraordinary prejudice in America at that moment—Africans (and, implicitly, African Americans) and America's former enemies,

HERE'S A GUIDE TO THE FAMILY OF MAN



Architect: Paul Rudolph

Steichen's photographic tribute to humanity is so huge and covers such a wide scope that it requires new approaches to organization and display. The architect's drawing above shows how some of the problems were solved. Groups of related pictures are indicated by number in approximately the order they are seen by a visitor walking through the exhibition: 1 entrance arch, 2 lovers, 3 childbirth, 4 mothers and children, 5 children playing, 6 disturbed children, 7 fathers and sons, 8 photograph displayed on the floor, 9 "family of man" central theme pictures, 10 agriculture, 11 labor, 12 household and office work, 13 eating, 14 folk-singing, 15 dancing, 16 music, 17 drinking, 18 playing, 19 ring-around-the-rosy stand, 20 learning, thinking, and teaching, 21 human relations, 22 death, 23 loneliness, 24 grief, pity, 25 dreamers, 26 religion, 27 hard times and famine, 28 man's inhumanity to man, 29 rebels, 30 youth, 31 justice, 32 public debate, 33 faces of war, 34 dead soldier, 35 illuminated transparency of H-bomb explosion, 36 UN, and 37 children.

FIGURE 6.4.

Though *The Family of Man* was organized around the individual human life cycle, viewers did not have to follow that order as they moved through the exhibition. Instead, until they reached the final hallway, they were in charge of their own movements. From *Popular Photography* (May 1955), 148. Used by permission of *Popular Photography*, a division of Bonnier Corporation.

the Japanese—and with another former enemy, the Italians. To stand among these images was to stand in a three-dimensional environment built along the lines laid down by theorists like Harold Lasswell in his essay on democratic character: it was to be invited to perceive the Africans and Japanese not as somehow lesser people, but instead, to recognize a *likeness* between them and more dominant groups. Though the images certainly echoed stereotypes, they also solicited empathy—and that at a time when such fellow-feeling was rare in the United States.

From the central area, visitors could turn right and examine the hallway of families playing if they had ignored it at first, or they could walk forward into a long, baffled room with massive landscapes on the walls. These last included Ansel Adam's *Mount Williamson* and fields of waving grain, and set here and there among them, smaller, varied images of European peasant families at the dinner table, and Mongolian horsemen galloping across



FIGURE 6.5.

The central display in *The Family of Man* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1955. Photograph by Ezra Stoller. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art, licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York.

the steppes. At the opening to this room stood a wheel of images the size of a small merry-go-round on a children's playground. The images mounted there depicted children from around the world playing Ring Around the Rosie. And at the other end, large convex panels hung from the wall, with images of funerals and mourning. In each case, visitors confronted images of individuals from around the world engaged in activities that Steichen saw as both regional and universal. Moreover, they encountered those images at eye level, overhead, and well below the waist. They were in fact surrounded by the families of the globe.

Viewers could linger among all of these images for as long as they liked. They could return to either of the long rooms or to the central family area as well. But when they were finished with these zones, they had to turn into a long hallway, with images jutting from the walls at ninety degrees. About halfway down this hall, they faced a wall with nine close-up portraits of identical size and, set among them, a mirror. Alongside these pictures, Steichen placed the words of Bertrand Russell: "The best authorities are unanimous in saying the war with hydrogen bombs is quite likely to put an end to the human race. There will be universal death—sudden only for a fortunate minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration." The portraits in turn featured the suffering faces of three men, three women, and three children, and among them an American soldier fresh from battle, almost certainly in Korea.

At the center of these pictures, viewers saw their own faces. Steichen and Miller removed the mirror after two weeks, having come to believe that it was "corny and wrong."⁵⁰ But the hope behind it remained. As Steichen put it, "When people come out of this show they'll feel that they've looked in a mirror; that we're all alike."⁵¹ Steichen's hope echoes both the goals and the aesthetic psychology that drove the museum's efforts in art therapy for veterans and art education for children. If a painting or a drawing by a traumatized veteran revealed his unique humanity, Steichen suggested that the photographs in *The Family of Man* likewise opened windows onto the interior humanity of their subjects. He hoped that by gazing into images of others who were racially and culturally different from themselves, visitors could see beyond skin color and beyond whatever prejudices they themselves might carry. He hoped they could see through the

image until, at a psychological level, its transparency transformed it into a mirror of their own interior individuality. In a sense, Steichen asked his viewers to stare *through* the images on the wall and, thereby, into their own humanity. Much like veterans at D'Amico's War Veterans' Art Center, visitors were to use art to simultaneously engage their own, individualized responses and to rejoin a larger community of human beings. And like parents and children in a home art gallery, they were to see pieces of themselves on the walls and so come to understand themselves as unique members of a creative, egalitarian family.

Even as they saw themselves in the mirror, viewers could glimpse another wall beyond the faces and a soldier, nationality unknown, face down in the dirt, his rifle stuck in the ground to mark his body. When they turned and walked past the soldier, visitors entered a chamber and faced the one color image in the show: an eight-foot-tall transparency of a mushroom cloud. Until this point in the exhibition, they could meander among arrays of images. This picture of a hydrogen bomb exploding was a choke point, a single image every viewer had to confront before moving on. For Steichen, the image clearly represented what might happen to the human race if individuals failed to recognize the qualities they shared. In 1955 America, the image also likely reminded American viewers, first, that theirs was the only nation that had dropped an atomic bomb on civilian populations and, second, that they might be the objects of such attacks themselves. To drive these points home, the exhibition even included the image of a Japanese boy wandering in the ruins of Nagasaki.

Beyond the bomb, viewers continued down a wide hallway and faced a series of portraits of male-and-female couples, each labeled "We two form a multitude." These images hung like street signs at a ninety-degree angle from a wall-sized picture of the United Nations General Assembly. Just beyond the delegates, again at a ninety-degree angle, viewers could see the torso of a woman draped in flowers, walking along the edge of the ocean. Beyond her, they came first to a roomful of pictures of children playing, and finally to one of *Life* photographer W. Eugene Smith's most well-known images, *The Walk in Paradise Garden*. Just as they were preparing to leave the exhibition hall, visitors saw Smith's two toddler subjects, walk-



FIGURE 6.6.

Photographer Wayne Miller's wife and children in front of a wall-sized color transparency of the H-bomb at *The Family of Man*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955. Photograph by Wayne Miller, Magnum Photos. Used by permission.

ing up out of a darkened, leafy bower. In the exhibition catalog, the caption to this image reminded them of its meaning in an atomic era: there was "A world to be born under your footsteps . . ." ⁵²

In its final spaces, *The Family of Man* was as heavy-handed in its message as a supermarket greeting card. Yet this does not mean that we should read the exhibition simply as a piece of propaganda. Rather, in the terms of its own time, it was an effort to make visible a new, more diverse, and more tolerant vision of both the United States and the globe. It was also an effort to help produce citizens who might see themselves and racial Others as equals, who might see in the strangeness of African polygamy a mirror of down-home white America. The key to this process was not simply asking viewers to see others like themselves. Instead, it was borrowing the educational ideals of Victor D'Amico and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and the extended

field of vision technique developed by Herbert Bayer, and deploying both in a new political context. With images literally all around them, visitors to *The Family of Man* had to make choices about where to look and how to integrate what they saw into their own worldviews. This process, in turn, exercised the psychological muscles on which democracy and perhaps even the future of the world depended.

In 1955 a number of reviewers marveled at the show's installation and its implications for viewers. One, photographer Barbara Morgan, even argued that the combination of architectural and photographic elements in the show constituted a new medium: "Here one is instantly conscious that this is no orthodox show of 'exhibition prints' hung salon-wise. It is something for which we need a new term. . . . Several have been suggested, 'photographic-Mosaic,' 'three-dimensional editorializing,' 'movie of stills,' yet they all fail—too cumbersome—not accurate enough. . . ." ⁵³ Morgan went on to select her own term, the "theme show," and to describe it as a new "photographic genre. . . . which fuses science, photography, architecture, layout and writing into a compelling synthesis." Above all, this new genre forced individuals to develop independent psychological reactions to what they saw: "Juxtaposition of photographs meant to be seen in relation to each other begets new meaning to a thoughtful visitor. . . . Our blind spots and sensitivities being semantically what they are, to every thinking onlooker these cross-connected ways of life will mean vastly different things." Yet they would not lead to an *unlimited* range of interpretation. Rather, they would lead to a diverse but unified condition of interpersonal and international empathy. As Morgan put it,

In comprehending the show the individual himself is also enlarged, for these photographs are not photographs only—they are also phantom images of our co-citizens; this woman into whose photographic eyes I now look is perhaps today weeding her family rice paddy, or boiling a fish in coconut milk. Can you look at the polygamist family group and imagine the different norms that make them live happily in their society which is so unlike—yet like—our own? Empathy with these hundreds of human beings truly expands our sense of values." ⁵⁴

FREEDOM AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

Over the next decade, the United States Information Agency would send the exhibition around the world and transform it into essential tool for the promulgation not only of the psychology of democracy, but of American economic and political expansionism. But even as the state worked to turn it into a piece of propaganda, *The Family of Man* carried with it undercurrents of protest and of utopian globalism that would flow directly into the 1960s. Less than a year before Rosa Parks sat down in the front of a bus, *The Family of Man* modeled the kind of society that she was about to call for. Did that world encompass all human differences? No. Did the exhibition acknowledge any kind of sexuality other than heterosexuality? No, it didn't. But at one of the most gender-conservative, race-sensitive, and hypermilitarized moments in American history, *The Family of Man* presented a three-dimensional environment in which Americans were asked to accept practitioners of alternative sexuality (polygamy) and members of routinely demonized groups (Africans, Japanese, communist Russians and Chinese) as people like themselves. And they were asked to reject warfare as a crime against the species.

At the same time, *The Family of Man* asked visitors to practice the perceptual skills on which the development of democratic personalities—and thus, democratic societies—depended. In keeping with both D'Amico's immersive teaching methods and Bayer's extended field of vision, the makers of *The Family of Man* surrounded their audiences with images. At one level, each image offered viewers a potential moment of identification, a window through the life of another that allowed visitors to reflect on their own lives. At another level, however, the pictures acted as an ensemble, an array of images that visitors needed to rearrange within their own psyches. In the process of aggregating and organizing these images, visitors could, at least in theory, engage in a degree of self-formation not open to citizens of authoritarian regimes. Most important, they could emerge from this process psychologically whole and self-directing. Unlike the citizens of Nazi Germany or of the Soviet Union, China, or North Korea—at least as so many Americans imagined them—visitors to *The Family of Man* would

not suffer from psychological fragmentation or interpersonal atomization. As a result, they would not be victimized by despots.

Nor would they run wild, however. Even as they offered viewers the chance to do the democratic psychological work of choosing others with whom to identify, Steichen, Miller, and Rudolph constrained their visitors' choices. *The Family of Man* thus modeled a more diverse and tolerant society, but also a society whose members had adjusted themselves to an array of opportunities chosen on their behalf by those in power. In comparison to fascist alternatives, the world brought to life at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955 must have looked enormously individualistic, varied, and free. But even as it challenged the hierarchies of totalitarianism, the exhibition modeled the emergence of a society whose citizens were to manage themselves in terms set by the systems within which they lived—and by the experts who developed those systems.

54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., 255–57.
56. Ibid., 11.
57. Ibid.
58. Lasswell, *Democratic Character*, 487–91.
59. Ibid., 487.
60. Ibid., 495–96.
61. Ibid., 496.
62. Ibid., 513.
63. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, 1.
64. Ibid., 250.
65. Ibid., 5–6.
66. Ibid., 252.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 249.
69. Ibid., 256.
70. Riesman et al., *The Lonely Crowd*, 4.
71. Ibid., 25.
72. Ibid., 128.
73. Ibid., 46.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Szarkowski, John, “The Family of Man,” 13.
2. Barthes, “‘La Grande Famille des Hommes’”; Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography”; Berger, *About Looking*; Solomon-Godeau, “‘The Family of Man’: Den Humanismus für ein Postmodernes Zeitalter Aufpolieren/‘The Family of Man.’ Refurbishing Humanism for a Postmodern Age”; Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs.” See also Kaplan, *American Exposures*. For a summary and analysis of critical responses to the show to 1999, see Berlier, “The Family of Man: Readings of an Exhibition.” For a recent collection of essays on related themes, see Back and Schmidt-Linsenhoff, eds., *The Family of Man 1955–2001*. There have been two particularly important exceptions to the string of highly critical responses to the exhibition. See Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, for a nuanced discussion of the political and cultural context in which the show appeared. See Stimson, *The Pivot of the World*, for a persuasive reading of the exhibition’s images in relation to one another and of the show’s efforts to foster a new globalist subjectivity.
3. For more on concerns about children in this period, see Dixon, *Keep Them Human*, and Sammond, *Babes in Tomorrowland*.
4. Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 167.

5. “Modern Art for Children,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*.
6. Museum of Modern Art, New York Department of Education, and Victor D’Amico, *Experiments in Creative Art Teaching*, 15.
7. Morgan, “From Modernist Utopia to Cold War Reality,” 156.
8. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 57.
9. “Portrait of the Artist as a Child,” *House and Garden*, 65.
10. D’Amico, “Art Therapy in Education,” 9.
11. *Ibid.*, 10.
12. Liss, “Creative Therapy,” 13.
13. Moholy-Nagy, “Better Than Before,” 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 5.
15. *Ibid.*, 6.
16. Victor D’Amico, untitled typescript report on the War Veterans’ Art Center (June, 1948), 6–14, 6. In Victor D’Amico papers III.A.13, Museum of Modern Art Archives.
17. *Ibid.*, 15.
18. Bernard Pfriem, “Advanced Drawing and Painting,” in Victor D’Amico, untitled typescript report on the War Veterans’ Art Center (June, 1948), 18–20, 18. In Victor D’Amico papers III.A.13, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
19. Victor D’Amico, untitled typescript report, 6–14, 10.
20. See May, *Homeward Bound*, especially chapter 1.
21. Anshen, “Preface,” in Anshen, Ruth Nanda, ed., *The Family* (rev. ed. New York: Harper, 1959), xv–xix, xvi.
22. Anshen, “The Family in Transition,” 3.
23. Horkheimer, “Authoritarianism and the Family,” 368.
24. Ogata, “Creative Playthings.” On the role of creativity as an idea in this period more generally, see Cohen-Cole, “The Creative American.”
25. Quoted in Ogata, “Creative Playthings,” 142.
26. Morgan, “From Modernist Utopia to Cold War Reality,” 162–63.
27. Victor D’Amico, “Point of View: An Occasional Supplement to the Newsletter of the Committee on Art Education” (April 1954), 2; quoted *ibid.*, 163.
28. As Lynn Spigel has shown, the museum had extensive connections to the television industry in this period. See Spigel, *TV by Design*. On the role of television in shaping cold war citizenship, see McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine*, and Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*.
29. *Through the Enchanted Gate*, 1952 (first season), “Feeling Pictures” episode. For more on *Through the Enchanted Gate*, see Harvey, “Through the Enchanted Gate.”
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Through the Enchanted Gate*, 1952 (first season), “Space Designs” episode.
32. *Through the Enchanted Gate*, 1953 (second season), “The City” episode.

33. Ibid.
34. D'Amico, *Art for the Family*, 101. The family gallery echoed a widely shared concern with creating creative spaces for children in the home. See Ogata, "Building Imagination in Postwar American Children's Rooms."
35. Ibid., 105.
36. Edward Steichen, "The Museum of Modern Art and 'The Family of Man,'" in Steichen, *A Life in Photography*, not paginated.
37. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 41.
38. Dorothea Lange, letter, January 16, 1953; quoted in Szarkowski, "The Family of Man," 24.
39. Photography, said Steichen, "communicates equally to everybody throughout the world. It is the only universal language we have, the only one requiring no translation." Steichen, "Photography: Witness and Recorder of History," 160.
40. Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 325.
41. Ford Foundation, "Report of the Trustees of the Ford Foundation," September 27, 1950, 16.
42. Ibid., 7.
43. Ibid., 17.
44. Ibid., 9.
45. All quotations from René d'Harnoncourt, draft of "Letter to Henry Ford II," n.d., 2–5, in René d'Harnoncourt papers, VII.85, Museum of Modern Art archives.
46. Ibid., 14, 4.
47. Ibid., 5.
48. Carl Sandburg, prologue to Steichen and Museum of Modern Art, *The Family of Man*, 3.
49. Paul Rudolph, interview with Mary Anne Staniszewski, December 27, 1993; quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 240.
50. Wayne Miller, interview with Mary Anne Staniszewski, July 18, 1996, quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 244.
51. Edward Steichen, "'The Family of Man,'" *Vogue*, February 1, 1955, 168; quoted in Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 244.
52. St.-John Perse, quoted in Steichen and Museum of Modern Art, *The Family of Man*, 192.
53. Morgan, "The Theme Show," 24.
54. Ibid., 26.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. US Information Agency, "Communications Research and USIS Operations," USIA special report S-65-59, National Archives and Records